

Vermont javelin competitor, Alverta Perkins

PHOTO: GREG THOMPSON



LET THE GAMES BEGIN

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worldwide GLBT athletics network, and the Outgames.

But for most LGBT Vermonters who want to compete, the choice comes down to logistics, not politics. Alverta Perkins decided to go to Montreal because it's close in terms of driving and because a few of her friends were going as observers. (The distance from Burlington to Montreal is 96 miles; to Chicago, it's 915 miles.) "I said the heck with Chicago, Montreal is a lot closer," said Perkins, 81. She plans to compete in the javelin, discus and shot-put events. Although she is a veteran of the Vermont Games and the Senior Olympics, Perkins

doesn't approach sports with a killer attitude. "I don't have that fire in my belly for competition," she said. "I like meeting other people. At the Senior Olympics, the people are very supportive."

Since fracturing her tibia while doing the long jump last December, Perkins has re-structured her workouts, gearing them more toward other track and field events. "I go to an exercise class three times a week at UVM," she explained. "And I work out in the pool twice a week. Sometimes I don't feel like going but I make myself. I just do it and it feels great."

Fran Moravcsik, 71, plans to compete in the same three track and field events, but at the Gay Games in Chicago instead. "I heard Montreal was splitting from the Gay Games and that was

kind of a negative for me," she said. "Besides, my daughter lives in the Chicago area. I'll visit her when I'm there but I'll be staying with a friend who's also going to the Games." Moravcsik said she trains with a coach at UVM. "He tells me what to do, what to eat, how to do things safely," she explained. She said she started jogging to reduce stress and eventually got into track and field. "I'd be driving around and I was so emotional. I went to the track to get rid of my frustration."

For Joan Gardner, 49, attending the Gay Games in Chicago presents a thrilling opportunity to share the limelight with 17 female powerlifters. "That's amazing," said Gardner. "Usually there's just one or two women powerlifters at a competition."

1st World Outgames (Montreal)

July 30 - August 5, 2006

Online: <http://www.montreal2006.org>

Number of Sports: 35

Registration fee: \$282 U.S. dollars (includes one event)

Late registration deadline: July 1

Confirmed participants: 12,000

Participant goal: 16,000

Visitor goal: 250,000

Countries participating so far: 109

Projected windfall for city: \$150 million

Major sponsors: Air Canada, Labatt beer, 3 levels of govt.

Affiliated events: Human Rights Conference (July 26-29); Divers/Cité LGBT pride Festival (July 30-Aug. 6)

Next Outgames: 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark

Gay Games VII (Chicago)

July 15-July 22, 2006

Online: <http://www.gaygameschicago.org>

Number of Sports: 30

Registration Fee: \$195 (plus \$35 to \$75 per event)

Late registration deadline: July 1

Confirmed participants: 10,620

Participant goal: 12,000

Visitor goal: 100,000

Countries participating so far: 47

Projected windfall for city: up to \$114 million

Major sponsors: American Airlines, Planet-Out, Walgreens

Affiliated events: Gay Expo (July 14-17); Arts Festival (July 14-23)

Next Gay Games: 2010 in Cologne, Germany

But is the competition between Montreal and Chicago good for the long-term fitness of the gay sports movement?

"It's a real dilemma for many athletes," said Pascal Dessureault, a spokesperson for the Outgames. Kevin Boyer, Co-Vice Chair of the Board of Gay Games VII, agreed. "It's not good to have both at the same time," Boyer said, adding that even if both events are successful there will still be a desire to bring the pinnacle of GLBT sports back under one roof.

"There's great value to having a global, unified event," he said.

Boyer said the split poses many organizational difficulties for gay athletic groups. Many have traditionally had annual championships except

in Gay Games years. Now they must contend with 2009 and 2010, when the next Outgames and Gay Games will be held.

"I'm sure both of this summer's events will be successful," said author Patricia Nell Warren. "But afterward, there will be some hard choices to make about the future." Warren's groundbreaking 1974 book *The Frontrunner* depicted a love story between an ex-marine track coach and an Olympic athlete. Recently, she has been writing about famous gay and lesbian athletes through the ages, including Achilles and Joan of Arc. The series is posted on Outsports.com and Warren said she hopes to publish the series as a book. She said gay athletics inherently has "an extra degree of drama."

But she wondered why the various parties involved with the Gay Games and Outgames can't resolve their differences. "Imagine if there were two Olympics?" she asked. If the Olympics can figure out how to handle steroids and gender testing, she said, gay athletics groups should be able to come together as well. ▼

➔ Max Harrold is a journalist who lives in Montreal. He is a part-time reporter for *The Gazette*, Montreal's English-language daily newspaper, and a scriptwriter for *How It's Made*, a TV show airing on the Discovery Channel. Max was a swimmer at the Gay Games in '94 and '98. He hopes to convince his life partner, OITM Operations Manager Greg Thompson, to participate with him at the Outgames this summer.



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